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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE: ANNUAL OSAC CRIME / SAFETY REPORT

11. (U) ANNUAL OSAC CRIME/SAFETY REPORT

1I. Overall Crime and Safety Situation. Post's assessment is that the overall level of crime in Singapore is low. Complete crime statistics for 2008 will be published in the first quarter of 2009, and Post will report any significant changes when the information becomes available from Singapore Police Force (SPF) authorities. The SPF has changed the categories of crime statistics it reported for 2008. Murder, rape and vehicle theft are no longer reported as separate categories. Crimes against persons, which include murder, rape and rioting, fell 2% during the first half of 2008. (Rioting includes crimes associated with public disorder, including physical confrontations between several individuals, but less than the U.S. definition of a riot). Specific murder and rape statistics are not available for the period, but Post believes that the murder rate remains low in this city-state of 4.5 million people. During the first half of 2007, the SPF reported that murder cases declined to six, compared to twelve cases reported for the same period in 2006. Statistics for reported incidents of rape have not been reported for the first half of 2008. During the first half of 2007, reported incidents of rape increased to 70 cases, compared to 53 cases during the same period in 2006. Motor vehicle theft was not reported as a separate category. It is now reported with theft and related crimes. For 2008, theft from vehicles increased 26% compared to the same period in 2007. Robbery and snatch theft targeting elderly persons increased 25% in January - June 2008 compared to the same period in 2007. The SPF reported a 3.4% increase in all types of theft and related crimes for the first half of 2008. The separate category of commercial crimes is reported to have increased 11.7% for the period. The SPF reported that housebreaking and related crimes have decreased 21.7% for the first half of 2008. Statistics for Outrage of Modesty, a Singaporean crime pertaining to unwanted sexual touching, have not been reported for the first half of 2008.

American and Singaporean authorities continue to receive complaints from small businesses victimized by credit card fraud using Singapore as a transshipment point for criminal enterprises elsewhere in the region. Small American businesses shipping goods to customers located in Singapore should be aware that thieves may use fraudulent credit card information and Singaporean addresses to defraud a business of payment for goods and arrange a transshipment of the goods to points outside of Singapore. Some freight forwarding companies in Singapore may need to scrutinize better all requests to re-label U.S. express air shipments with orders for transshipment to Indonesia and other points outside Singapore. Although a shipment's ultimate destination may not be readily apparent, businesses should thoroughly research all buyers using a shipping address in Singapore to ensure the buyer possesses a functioning business located in Singapore. The SPF Commercial Affairs Department investigates credit card fraud in Singapore.

Victims of transshipment fraud may research how to report the fraud at a U.S. Department of Justice website provided in this report under Sources of Information.

Handphones (cellular telephones) have in the past been the primary target for robbers and snatch thieves. The SPF advised that handphone-related crimes dropped due to increased public education and stricter enforcement against second-hand handphone

dealers who break laws or regulations. The SPF has implemented an online database of the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) numbers of stolen handphones for easy screening by purchasers.

The SPF advises that most telephone scams in Singapore attempt to persuade people to make advance payments to claim a prize. Sometimes the prize used to lure victims may be the promise of a luxury car and other valuables. Scammers contact victims via SMS messages to inform them that they won a "lucky draw." From January to June 2008 180 victims fell prey to the lucky draw scam. Police advise that another type of phone scam involves a fabricated ransom demand for the kidnapping of a family member. Sometimes scammers claimed that the alleged kidnapped family member failed to honor illegal loan repayments, or the family member acted as guarantor for the illegal loan. During January - June 2008, scammers cheated 21 victims out of S\$322,000. Another recent trend in phone scams involves the impersonation of a Singapore official such as a member of the Supreme Court staff or a police officer. The phone scammers, posing as a government official and using replicated telephone numbers of authorities, accuse victims of a criminal offense and attempt to leverage a money transfer as payment for a fine for the crime.

Crime in Singapore is generally non-confrontational, and usually opportunistic in nature. While overall crimes against persons have decreased, crimes against elderly persons increased in the first half of 2008. The number of elderly victims of robberies and snatch theft increased from 116 in the first half of 2007 to 145 persons in

the same period in 2008. Generally, elderly citizens are targeted in elevators and public areas of public housing complexes, called Housing Development Board (HDB) flats in Singapore. In some cases the victims have been injured after being pushed down. Additionally, elderly victims have been targeted at home when thieves have claimed to be a utility worker such as an electrician requesting to enter the victim's home on the pretext of conducting an inspection. Thieves distracted elderly victims by requesting that the occupant hold onto materials or remain at an on/off switch while thieves stole valuables from the residence. In January - June 2008, 1015 incidents of theft from vehicles were reported, compared to 805 incidents reported in the same period in 2007. In most incidents thieves broke side windows of vehicles and tampered with the rear compartment of motorcycles to steal valuables. Laptop computers were stolen in many incidents, often when victims left their vehicle for a short time. Most cases of theft at residential units and hotels involve perpetrators who gained entry through unsecured windows or doors. A few incidents of serious crime involved attacks on Singaporeans by fellow Singaporeans with blunt instruments, knives or other edged weapons. Most of the incidents involving attacks with clubs and edged weapons appeared to involve young adults in and around some of Singapore's nightclubs. These attacks appear to be linked to low-level criminal activities. Specific areas of Singapore, including Geylang and lower-cost government housing areas suffered from more serious crime, such as muggings, loan-sharking and illicit drug use.

Geylang, a known red light district, and other specific locations harbor activities such as prostitution. Because firearms are unavailable and strictly controlled, edged-weapons are the weapons of choice for serious attackers in Singapore. Comparatively speaking, the crime rate in Singapore remains much lower than in most other major cities around the world; however, residents and visitors should be aware of their environment and exercise the same amount of caution they would in any other large city.

II. Political Violence. Singapore remains relatively free from civil unrest, political instability and credible terrorism threats. The Government of Singapore (GOS) frequently cautions its citizens that while the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) cell has been severely disrupted within Singapore, it has by no means been eradicated. Mohammad Hasan bin Saynudin, a Singaporean on trial in Indonesia on charges relating to alleged JI associated crimes, told the press in January 2009 that He had plotted to attack targets including Singapore's Changi Airport in 2000. During 2007, the Singaporean press reported that Singaporean authorities had detained several

Singaporeans for supporting extremist activities. It was reported that one of the detainees was a well educated, former Singaporean professional, who became a self-radicalized militant through accessing radical Islamist websites on the Internet. Several Singaporean press articles stated that home-grown, self-radicalized terrorists may become a security issue for Singapore in the future. On February 27, 2008 Singaporean JI member Mas Selamat bin Kastari escaped from detention in Singapore. Kastari has not been located. Terrorist attacks may occur in Southeast Asian nations, including Singapore, because extremist groups present in Southeast Asia have demonstrated transnational capabilities to carry out attacks against locations where westerners congregate. Terrorist groups do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Prudent measures should continue to be taken by business establishments, clubs, hotels, resorts, tourist areas, schools, churches and other soft targets facilities frequented by foreigners and where Americans congregate. Travelers should be vigilant when using public conveyances such as buses, subways, trains, planes and ferries.

Singaporean officials frequently emphasize the importance of community involvement and preparedness as critical elements in national security, as well as the importance of the commercial sector in effectively fighting terrorism. Police encourage and utilize neighborhood policing efforts such as neighborhood watches and business-based cooperatives to detect and report crime. In addition to community-based neighborhood watch groups, the GOS has organized corporate-based groups. In 2003 the GOS introduced the Safety & Security Watch Group (SSWG) as a police-networking platform for commercial sector members to collaborate on target hardening for facilities located in a geographic common area. In 2006 the GOS launched the Corporate First Responder (CFR) scheme to enable business facility managers to identify key personnel who will be allowed into cordoned areas in the aftermath of an incident to assist with rescue, recovery and investigation efforts, as well as conduct business continuity efforts. Previously the GOS provided counterterrorist briefings to over 40,000 registered taxi drivers, encouraging the drivers to report suspicious activities, passengers, and conversations in their cabs. And in January 2006, early on a Sunday morning, the GOS conducted an unannounced civil emergency exercise based on the terrorist attacks on public transportation networks in London and Madrid. Additionally, the SPF utilizes random, tactical foot patrols from the Special Operations Command to deter, detect and prevent political violence attacks.

Singapore does not generally issue permits for any potential demonstrations, regardless of their nature, and it is against the law for five or more people to congregate for such purposes.

III. Post-specific concerns. Singapore has not recently experienced natural disasters such as typhoons, tsunamis and earthquakes. Visitors to Singapore should be knowledgeable with regard to the severe penalties for narcotics trafficking - up to and including the death penalty. Despite these laws, drugs can be found in Singapore, and young people frequenting nightclubs should be particularly vigilant and remain aware of their surroundings. Incidents of individuals unknowingly ingesting a drug placed in a drink occasionally occur, and visitors should exercise as they would in any major U.S. city.

IV. The police are consistently professional and any report involving a crime incident will be handled in accordance with the prescribed regulations. Police harassment is not a problem in Singapore, and assistance can be readily obtained by dialing the standard emergency number, 999. Every district within Singapore has a dedicated neighborhood police center, and any neighborhood police center will accept the filing of a police report, not just in the district where the crime took place. Companies posting personnel in Singapore should conduct security and cultural awareness training for the employee and all family members. Rude and disorderly behavior, particularly directed against women, is prohibited. The offense for inappropriate behavior toward women is called Outrage of the Modesty, and it is often strictly enforced. The law can be used to protect men from inappropriate behavior as well.

IV. Medical services in Singapore are on par with those of the United States and other "First World" capitals. Singapore is a U.S. Government regional medical evacuation (medevac) destination. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) lauded Singapore's medical community during the SARS crisis for their honest reporting and heroic efforts in containing the virus. As a result, Singapore was removed relatively early from the CDC's list of countries to avoid. Singapore's plan for dealing with the current threat of Avian Influenza is considered among the best in the world by the World Health Organization. Singapore actively monitors the situation and has enacted a disease surveillance system to detect any human cases of Avian Influenza imported into Singapore. Additionally, Singapore has precautionary measures in place to ensure that no infected birds are imported into Singapore. It also has a contingency plan to deal with any outbreak of Avian Influenza in any of Singapore's poultry farms.

VI. Visitors should take normal big city precautions for their personal safety and security. Avoid carrying excess cash and credit cards and use credit cards only at reputable establishments. After using a credit card, check your receipts to assure that the proper charges have been made and compare those receipts with your monthly statement. Always remain alert in crowded public areas like hotel lobbies, subway stations, shopping centers and tourist areas where many pick-pocket and other common petty crimes occur. While staying in hotels, always use the hotel safe deposit box or in-room safe for your valuables and never leave personal and/or financial information unattended. Heed all warnings with regard to soft targets and potential terrorist threats. Know how to contact local emergency services for police, fire and medical. For fire safety, upon check in at a hotel, immediately learn the emergency escape routes and physically walk from your room out of the building. You should never wait until an actual emergency to try and put together a plan. Finally, if you become victim of a crime, file a police report. The police must know that a crime occurred in order to be more responsive to future problems.

VII. Embassy Singapore has an OSAC country council, which operates as a separate entity under the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) organization due to difficulties incorporating such organizations in Singapore. For specific information contact the regional security officer at the American Embassy. Tel: (65) 6476-9453, fax: (65) 6476 - 9040. Also visit the U.S. Embassy homepage cited below. One of the best sources for overseas security information is the OSAC electronic bulletin board. Travel advisories, country background notes, and links to other US government travel and security services are also available on the Internet.

#### Sources of information:

For Background Notes and other State Department services use the Department of State home page:  
<http://www.state.gov>

For travel advisories use the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

For Diplomatic Security Service information:  
<http://www.state.gov/m/ds/>

U.S. Embassy Singapore home page:  
<http://singapore.usembassy.gov/>

OSAC website: <http://www.osac.gov/>

U.S. Department of Justice fraud webpage:  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/whatwedo/whatwedoif.html>

For information on Avian Influenza in Singapore consult the Ministry of Home Affairs' home page:

[http://www.moh.gov.sg/corp/hottopics/avian\\_fl u/info.do](http://www.moh.gov.sg/corp/hottopics/avian_fl u/info.do)

Information from the Singapore Police Force (SPF) pertaining to crime can be obtained at the SPF home page:  
[www.spf.gov.sg](http://www.spf.gov.sg)

SPF Electronic Police Center (ePC):  
<http://www.spf.gov.sg/epc/epclinks.html#>

SPF links for the deaf, hearing impaired and speech impaired  
Emergency Service: SMS 70999

Important contact numbers for Singapore:

US Embassy switchboard: (65) 6476- 9100  
Singapore police emergency operator: 999  
Singapore fire and medical emergency: 995  
Orchard Neighborhood Police Centre, 51 Killiney Road,  
Singapore 239572:

-Orchard Road shopping district 1 800 735-9999 (toll free)

Central Police Division Headquarters:

-Central business district 1 800 224-0000 (toll free)

Tanglin Police Division Headquarters:

-Central shopping district 1 800 391-0000 (toll free)

End OSAC crime report.

Visit Embassy Singapore's Classified website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/singapore/ind ex.cfm>

SHIELDS